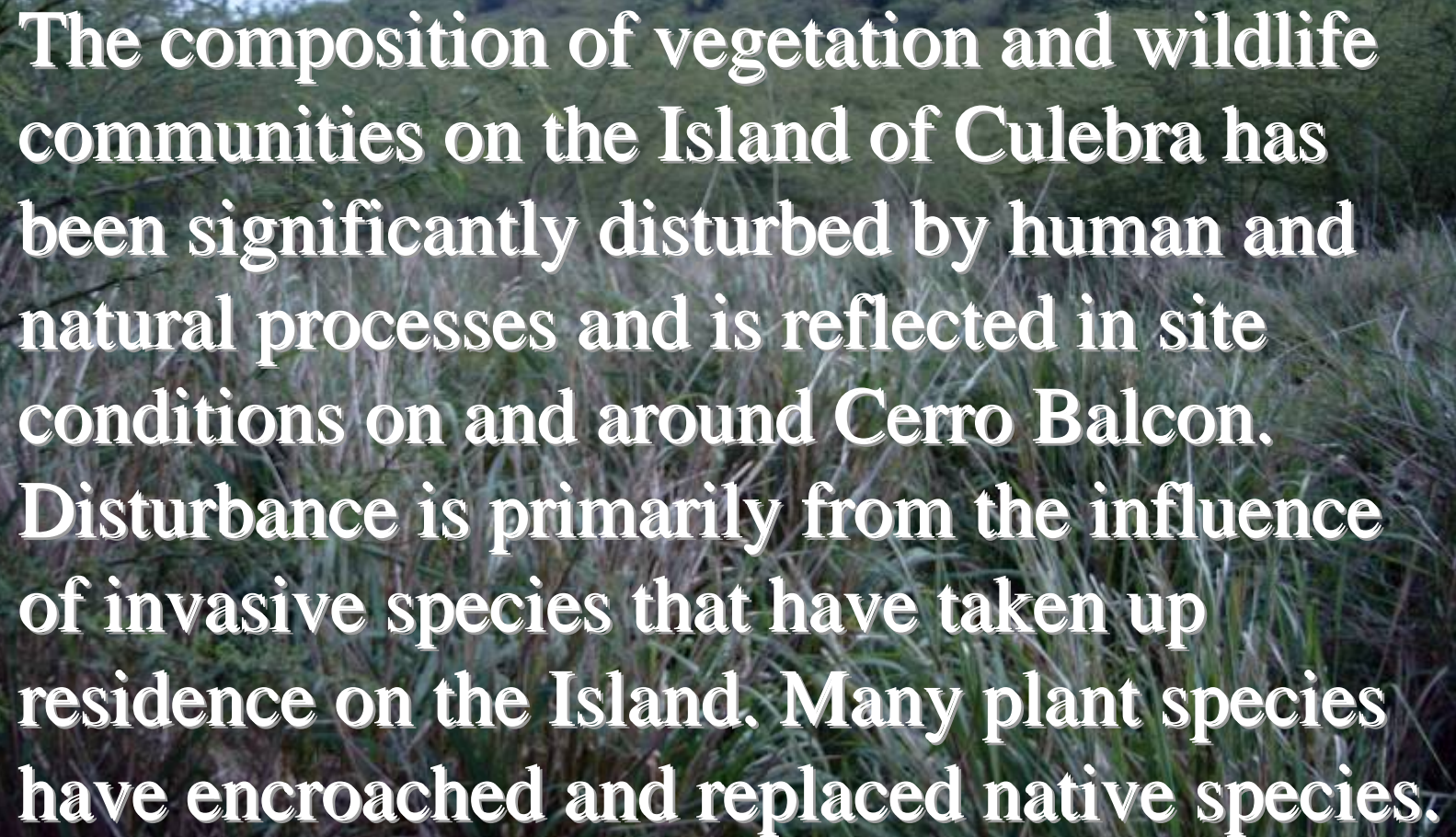


A white SUV is parked on a dirt path in a grassy, hilly landscape. The hills are covered in low-lying vegetation and scattered trees. The sky is blue with some clouds. The text "Ecological Considerations in Conducting MEC Removal" is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font.

# **Ecological Considerations in Conducting MEC Removal**





The composition of vegetation and wildlife communities on the Island of Culebra has been significantly disturbed by human and natural processes and is reflected in site conditions on and around Cerro Balcon. Disturbance is primarily from the influence of invasive species that have taken up residence on the Island. Many plant species have encroached and replaced native species.



**Most of the vegetation at the project site is found in the dense shrub layer, with some of the shrub species growing to small trees in size less than 12 feet in height. The dominant plant is the Sweet Acacia (*Acacia farnesiana*) an invasive plant that provides the majority of the vegetation cover in the area.**







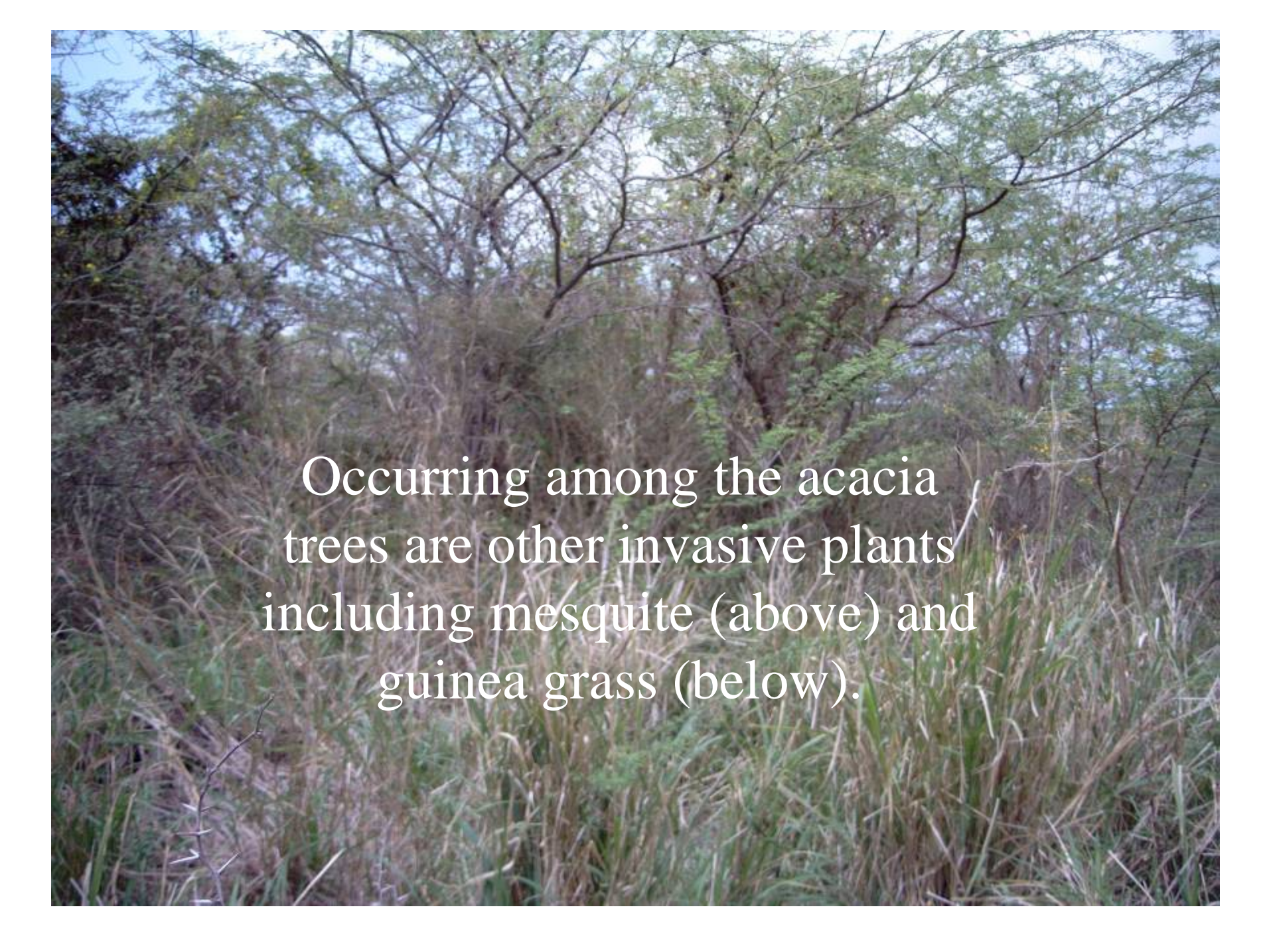
Sweet Acacia



# Sweet Acacia







Occurring among the acacia  
trees are other invasive plants  
including mesquite (above) and  
guinea grass (below).



Mesquite



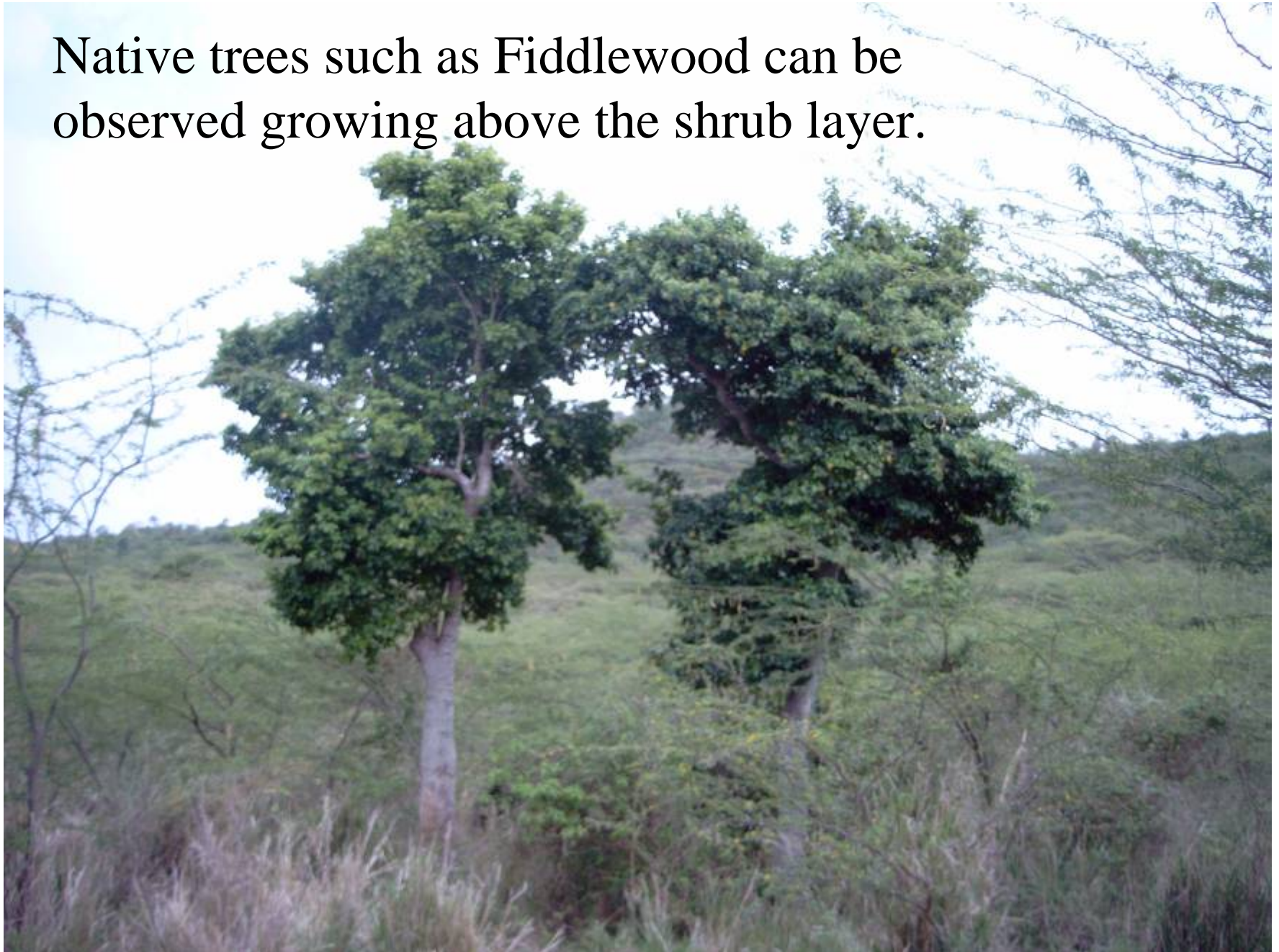


A photograph of a dense clump of Guinea grass. The grass has long, narrow, green leaves that are arching and spreading outwards. The base of the plant is covered with dry, brownish grass and soil. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Guinea grass

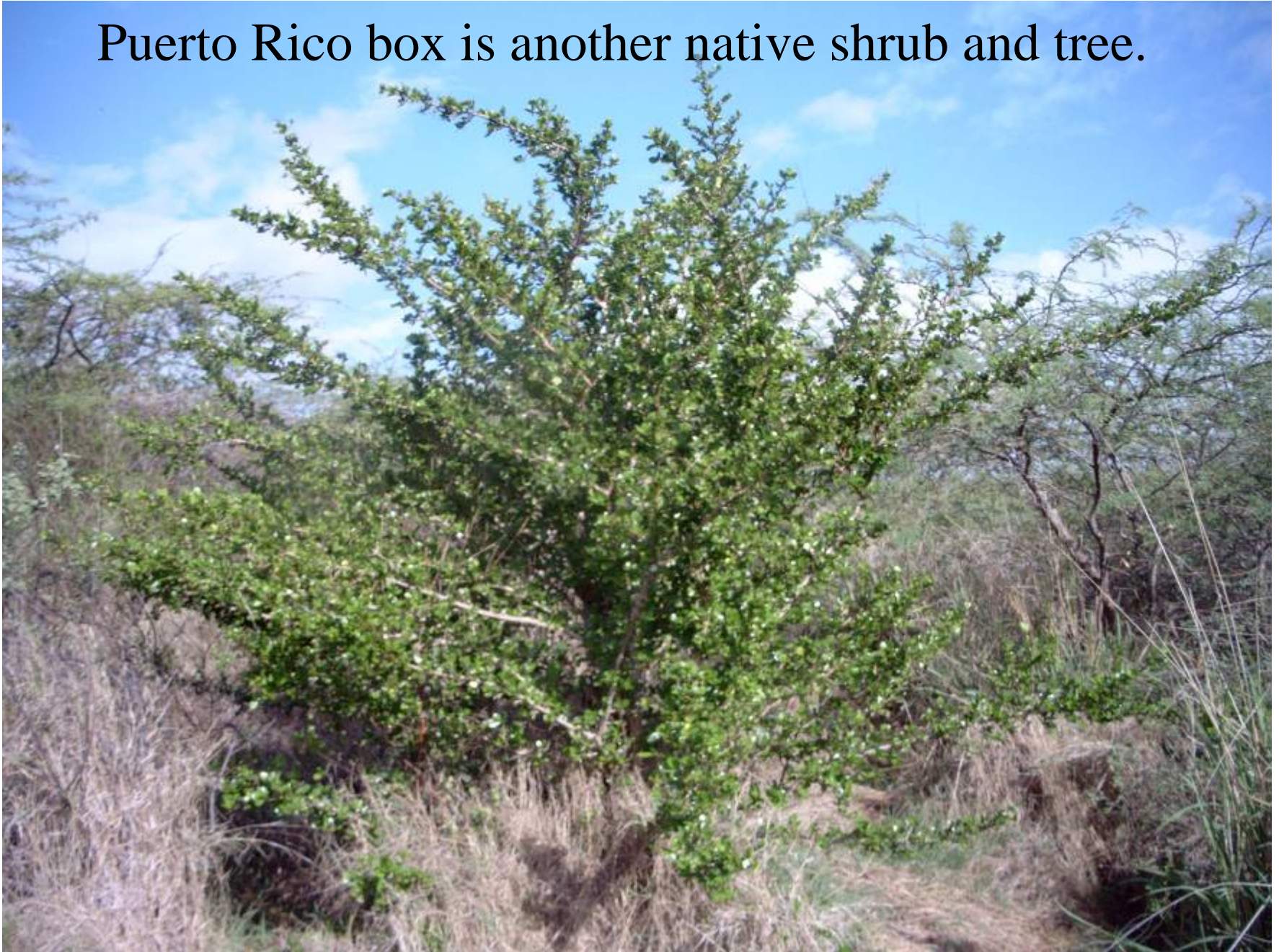


Native trees such as Fiddlewood can be observed growing above the shrub layer.





Puerto Rico box is another native shrub and tree.

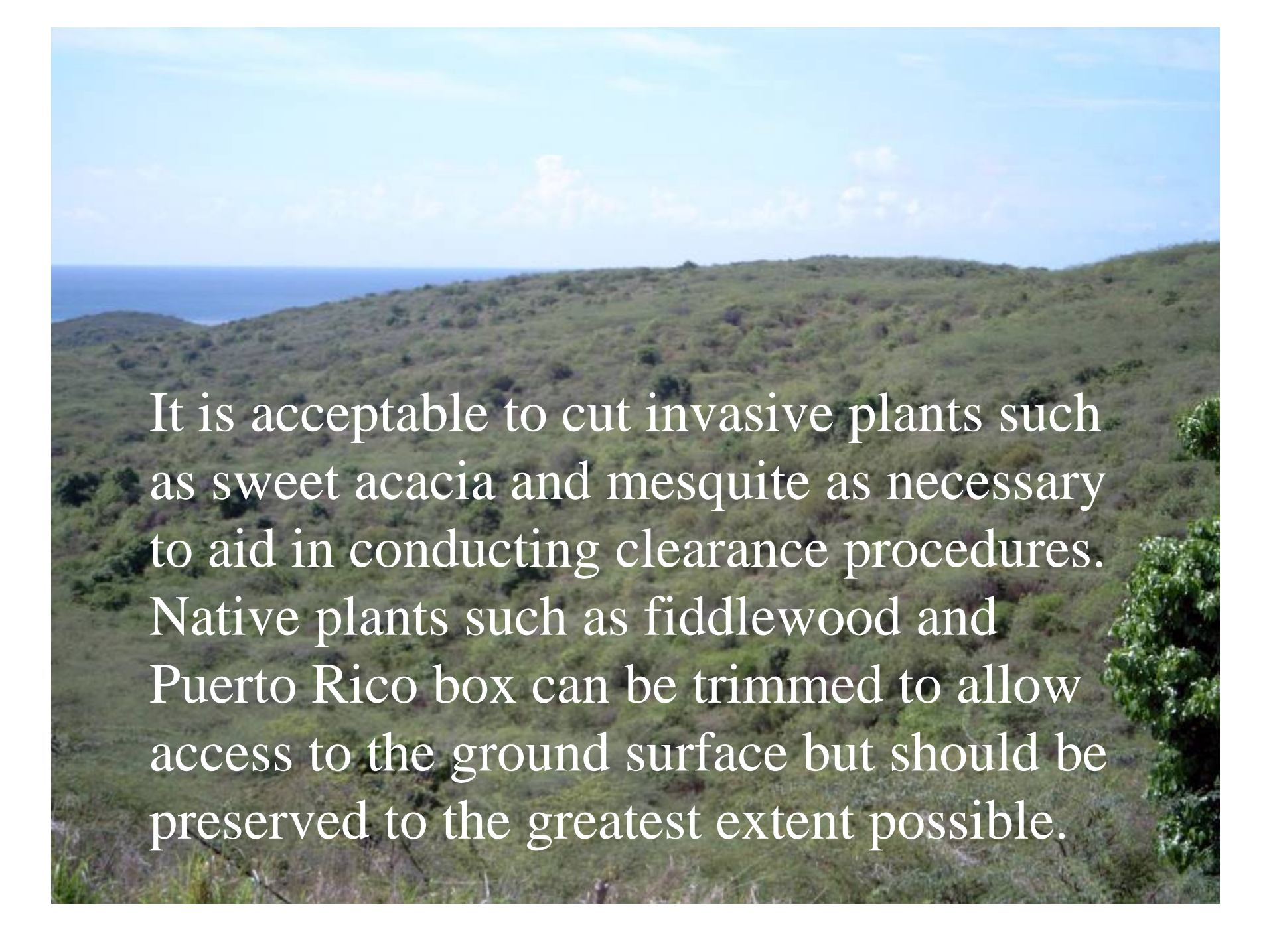






Puerto Rico box

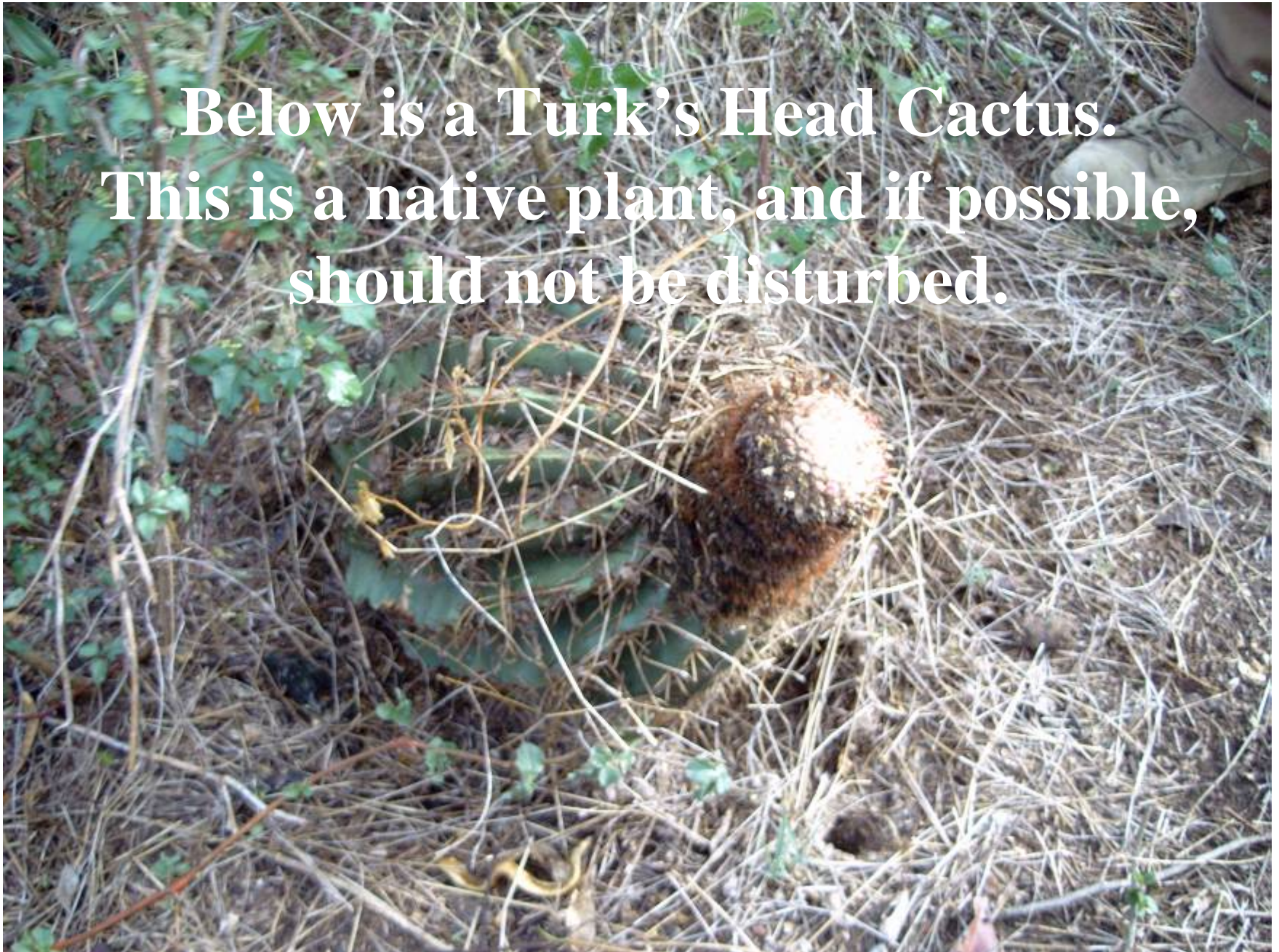




It is acceptable to cut invasive plants such as sweet acacia and mesquite as necessary to aid in conducting clearance procedures. Native plants such as fiddlewood and Puerto Rico box can be trimmed to allow access to the ground surface but should be preserved to the greatest extent possible.



**Below is a Turk's Head Cactus.  
This is a native plant, and if possible,  
should not be disturbed.**





Several species of wildlife reside in the Cerro Balcon area such as these cattle egrets. Also present are other bird species, deer, cattle, goats, iguanas, anoles, and snakes (not harmful).







Be observant of wildlife such as these wasps.  
They are relatively common and can be easily disturbed.